The Middlebury Campus

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COLLEGE MAKES HEADWAY ON PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION OF CAMPUS BUILDINGS

By BEN WAGNER
Staff Writer

Campus is alive once again with the sounds of students' voices, the clatter of feet and bicycle wheels on sidewalks — and the ongoing sound of various campus construction projects.

Major sites under construction this fall include Johnson Memorial Hall and Kohn field, the latter of which hosts women's field hockey and lacrosse events. The college also completed renovations for Warner Hall, while construction for a new first-year dorm to replace Battell has stalled.

The college announced construction plans for the new Battell in the spring of 2021, but

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TOM NEVINS/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
Renovations to the Johnson Memorial Building, located along Chateau Road, will continue into the fall.

NEW AMTRAK STOP CONNECTS MIDDLEBURY AND NEW YORK CITY

By MAYA HEIKKINEN
Editor at Large

Middlebury is now a station on Amtrak's Ethan Allen Express, which runs daily from New York's Penn Station to Burlington, Vt. by way of Albany and Rutland. The station opened on July 29, making it the first passenger rail service to operate in the area since 1953. The introduction of the service prompted increased rail safety awareness efforts in Middlebury over the past several months by Operation Lifesaver of Vermont, Inc.

These safety awareness measures have been successful so far, according to Toni Hamburg Clithero, state coordinator of Operation Lifesaver of Vermont, Inc. and Amtrak grants program manager. While the initial response to the new train has generally been positive, farmers with private crossings without bells and gates have expressed concern, requesting exact schedules to be able to safely move tractors and other slow-moving or large vehicles over the tracks. According to Clithero, however, there is no easy solution other than fitting these crossings with lights and gates, an operation which she said would be expensive and impractical given they are not in private use at all times of the year.

"The point is, you have to always expect a train because things happen in life; extra trains come, different trains come, come from either direction. Really the message has to be: Always expect a train," Clithero said.

On July 29, the day of the initial launch of the service to Middlebury, the Ethan Allen Express faced disruption in its regular route due to the City of Albany's decision to declare a state of emergency as a result of the deterioration of the vacant Central Warehouse. The damage had caused parts of the facade to fall off near the tracks, prompting Amtrak to suspend service on the tracks and necessitating a bus bridge to and from Schenectady and other points west for the Ethan Allen Express. Parts of the southern-facing facade were eventually removed or reinforced that weekend, allowing Amtrak to resume service on Aug. 1.

> "The point is, you have to always expect a train because things happen in life; extra trains come, different trains come, come from either direction. Really the message has to be: Always expect a train."

Both the Ethan Allen Express and the Vermonter, Amtrak's other service from St. Albans, Vt. to Washington, D.C., have returned to 100% of their 2019 capacity, which was their best year according to Clithero. Ridership of the Ethan Allen in July was around 11,000 passengers, more than double the approximately 5,000 passengers in June. Clithero noted that ridership is cyclical — it typically falls off during the winter months. This past winter, however, the Ethan Allen faced more severe decreases due to the Omicron variant and has seen increasing ridership since February. Clithero hopes that more feedback from passengers can provide a clearer picture of usage of the trains.

"That is definitely something I'm looking forward to doing, and I'm not exactly sure how we're going to roll it out, but some kind of surveys that we can do and can conduct so that we know why people are riding the train, what they're enjoying, what they have concerns about," Clithero said.

Sabrina Salam '24 rode the Ethan Allen Express from Penn Station to Middlebury on Sept. 5 to return to campus for the semester. The train left around 2:40 p.m., arriving in Middlebury around 9:00 p.m. after a slight delay due to technical difficulties at the previous stop, making the journey around six-and-a-half hours long. While Salam only saw one other Middlebury student on her trip, she believes there would have been more students had she traveled the weekend before classes started. She also expected a full train the entire time after seeing the trip sold out on Amtrak's website the previous day, but most passengers were not aboard for the entire trip to

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TOM NEVINS/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
The new Amtrak station, which runs from New York's Penn Station to downtown Middlebury, began service in late July.

Computer science department faces unprecedented class sizes amid staffing shortages

By AMANDA MANOOGIAN
Contributing Writer

An increase in interest in the Computer Science Department and a shortage of faculty have severely limited the number of classes being offered in the department this fall.

Students reported unprecedented class sizes and a lack of course availability that has made it challenging for current majors to satisfy their requirements.

An email sent in late spring 2022 from Professor Matthew Dickerson, then-chair of the department, to computer science majors said that a staffing shortage would limit upper-level classes available for the fall semester. It explicitly told majors that, with few exceptions, no student would be allowed to enroll in more than one class at the 300 level or above during registration.

According to the department website, five professors are on leave this semester. Two professors also resigned in the spring, creating an unexpected shortage of faculty available to teach in the fall.

In another email to graduating computer science majors, Dickerson explained that with a smaller number of computer science faculty teaching full time, the department will be offering fewer sections of CSCI 701 — the senior seminar formerly required for the major — this academic year than in the past. As of fall 2022, the Computer Science Department has moved towards new requirements which require CSCI 701 for departmental honors, but not for all majors. Students graduating in the classes of 2022.5, 2023 and 2023.5 will be allowed to replace CSCI 701 with another elective to meet the major requirements.

Upperclassmen in the major have accepted seats in increasingly large classes, and priority given to majors has made students outside the department effectively unable to take computer science electives this fall.

Grace Aronsohn '23.5, a computer science major, is taking Theory of Computation, a 300-level class with 37 other students. Aronsohn described the class as "the largest [she's] ever been enrolled in at Middlebury."

"I was also planning on taking Algorithms, which is usually offered every semester," Aronsohn said. The course, however, is not being taught this semester, despite it being required for the major.

Newly-hired Assistant Professor Phil Chodrow is currently teaching two sections of Introduction to Computing, each with 36 students.

"I'm still getting emails from students interested in taking my classes. The only reason I can't

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ELSA ALVARADO '18 NAMED YOUNGEST DIRECTOR AT PENTAGON

By ORLY BERKE
News Editor

At 24, Elsa Alvarado '18 is the youngest director at the Pentagon, appointed by President Biden to work as director of strategic communications for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs. The office provides support to the Secretary of Defense in communication with the White House, Cabinet Members, members of Congress and the Department of State.

But before Alvarado's work at the Pentagon, she was a political science major at Middlebury College, where she was most interested in American politics and government. As the first in her family to attend college, moving to rural Vermont and attending a primarily white institution was a contrast from her home in Queens, New York, but Alvarado found that in such a small community she really could hone her interests and find her voice.

"I grew up in NYC in public school with classes that had 40–50 students at a time. In those environments, it is easy to feel like your voice does not matter or gets outshined by others. But because Middlebury fosters a tight-knit community and offers small classes, I developed relationships and found that my opinion mattered," Alvarado said in an email to The Campus.

Alvarado excelled during her time at Middlebury, receiving a Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, which provided a stipend that allowed her to study abroad in a program that aims to broaden the global perspective of American students.

"Every student should have the opportunity to study abroad even if they're low-income and first generation students like myself," she told The Campus in 2016. "Studying abroad is an experience that allows students to see the world with a different lens and it offers an opportunity to grow academically and emotionally."

After graduating, she was named a Schwarzman Scholar, joining a program that allows students to study fully funded at Schwarzman College at Tsinghua University in Beijing for a one-year master's program in global affairs. After the program ended, Alvarado struggled to find a job as the Covid-19 pandemic limited job opportunities.

Alvarado decided to lean into her passions and work on the Biden 2020 campaign, applying to every available position before landing the job of vetting analyst. In that role, she primarily vetted potential speaking opportunities for Dr. Jill Biden, assessing every event and person Dr. Biden would attend and meet with to best promote the Biden campaign. After President Biden's win, Alvarado joined the 59th Presidential Inaugural Committee as a senior vetting analyst before being offered her current position in the Pentagon.

During the 18 months that Alvarado has served as director, she has learned how to readjust to a place foreign to her, much like when she first arrived at Middlebury. Alvarado said that even to this day she has worries about whether her colleagues will respect her position.

"I would be lying if I said I did not feel insecure every once in a while when I go to a meeting and I'm the only woman there. But I have to remind myself that I am here for a reason. I was not given this political appointment randomly — I was given the job because I have proven that I can do high-intensity work," she said in an email to The Campus.

Alvarado attributes much of her success to the mentors and organizations that helped guide her path. Due to this, Alvarado voluntarily runs an internship for college students through the Pentagon that is specifically geared towards creating pipelines into government for women and students of color.

"When I walk into a room, I am usually the only woman and Latina, and I do not want that to be the case in 10 years. That is why I started this program and that is why I mentor the interns for their long-term careers," Alvarado said.

Reika Herman '24 participated in this program over the summer, first working as a strategic communications intern where she helped prepare members of the Department of Defense for meetings with members of Congress, before changing focus to work on personnel and readiness issues relating to service member well-being.

"I was writing on stuff from artificial intelligence to abortion policy to ship building to relations in the Arctic — everything," Herman said.

When asked what advice she would give to other first-generation students, Alvarado emphasized that taking time to adjust to the new environment is essential, and that the number one advice she had was to be patient with yourself.

"When I moved to Vermont, I spent the first months just trying to wrap my brain around the fact that I was in a new state with people from all over the world. But as I got used to my environment, opened up and made connections, I genuinely fell in love with Middlebury," she said.

Elsa Alvarado '18 works as director of strategic communications for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs.

College tries out new half-credit course system this fall

By LAUREN THOMSON
Staff Writer

Middlebury College is offering six half-credit courses this fall across a few different departments. The courses are offered either full time for half of the semester or half the time for the full semester. One goal of the half-credit courses is to provide students with more flexibility to vary their credit load without adding or dropping a full course.

The half-credit courses offered this semester include Reading Islamic Sacred Texts, Early Daoist Texts, Unlearning Colonial Habits, Mathematical Problem-Solving and Experiential Learning Capstone. These courses span the Education Studies, Mathematics and Religious Studies Departments. The Experiential Learning Capstone is listed as an interdepartmental class.

The courses do not fulfill distribution requirements, and only the two Religious Studies courses count towards the major associated with their department. Other departments will make a decision about what half-credit courses can be counted towards as the model becomes more widespread, according to Elizabeth Morrison, a religion professor and member of the Educational Affairs Committee (EAC). Morrison is also teaching the half-credit course Early Daoist Texts this semester.

The EAC voted last year to implement the half-credit courses this fall. While one of the EAC's goals with half-credit courses is to provide students more credit flexibility, according to Morrison, the courses also allow more flexibility for professors when they plan their syllabi.

Some professors took a previously taught course and adapted it to fit the half-credit model, while others designed pathway courses to prepare students for other classes.

"[Early Daoist Texts] is based on a class that I once taught," Morrison said. "I thought that the material would be a really good fit because we are paying attention to two texts in particular that I thought would benefit from a slow reading. So I took the previous syllabus, and I took things out."

Morrison also noted that the class now weighs class participation more than her full-credit version previously did.

Priscilla Bremser, professor for Mathematical Problem-Solving, thought that the half-credit structure would be a great way to address "unfinished learning" in pre-calculus topics that would aid students looking to take calculus. The course is designed to be taken alongside calculus I to address foundational pre-calculus topics that may be problematic for students.

"I hope my course gives students with uneven mathematics backgrounds a chance to solidify foundational concepts so that they can succeed in calculus," Bremser said.

The flexible nature of the half-credit course structure impacts even the content explored in the class. Associate Professor of Education Jonathan Miller-Lane, who is teaching Unlearning Colonial Habits, was excited to explore new ideas in a space that is less rigid than the typical course structure.

"I thought that the material would be a really good fit because we are paying attention to two texts in particular that I thought would benefit from a slow reading. So I took the previous syllabus, and I took things out."

"The main idea was to explore different time slots, approaches, ideas, with a little more uncertainty being an acceptable quantity," Miller-Lane said. "I wanted to work on some ideas, but I wanted to work on them in an environment of profound uncertainty. I liked the idea of exploring what other time frames we can use to explore the questions we are trying to engage."

Camiel Schroeder '25, a student in Unlearning Colonial Habits, said that he was partially drawn to the course due to its unique structure. As a previous student of the professor, he felt Miller-Lane advertised the benefits of a half-credit class well.

"He said we were going to do this in a very unique sense in that it's just three long meetings on Saturdays and then a bunch of like three hour meetings during meals, which sounds ideal to me," Schroeder said. "It sounded like not a big commitment for big rewards, academically and experientially speaking."

Schroeder later informed The Campus he dropped Unlearning Colonial Habits during the second week of school — after his initial interview. He said he realized that taking 4.5 classes instead of 3.5 was overly ambitious for his fall semester.

Students can still sign up for half-credit courses through Sept. 23.

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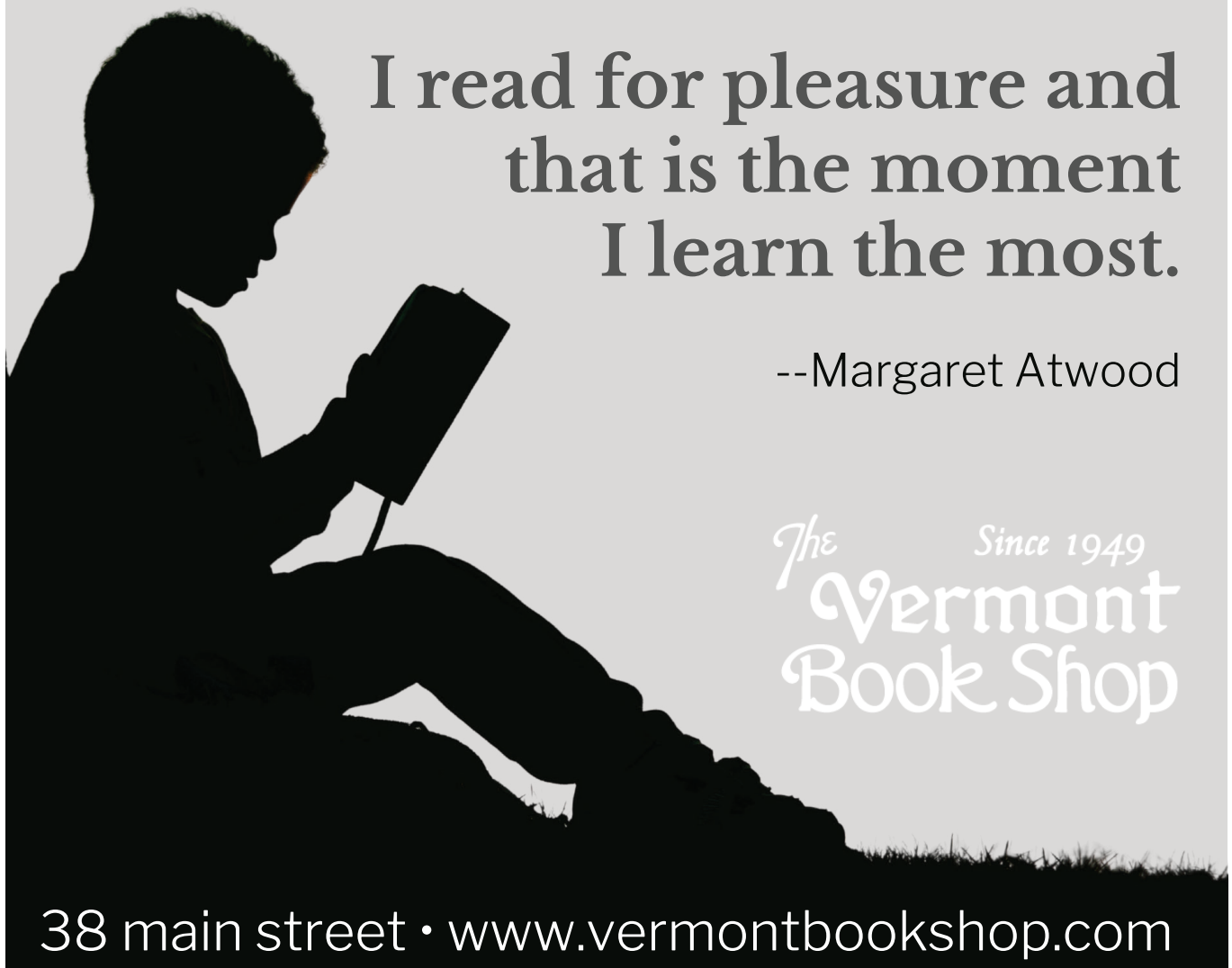

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NEW AMTRAK STOP CONNECTS MIDDLEBURY AND NEW YORK CITY

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Middlebury.

"It's full in New York, but then people start getting out, and it starts getting empty," Salam said.

Salam noted infrastructural differences between Penn Station and the station in Middlebury that made the logistics of disembarking with luggage more difficult and less accessible. While there is space for larger luggage on the train, getting off with it is unexpectedly challenging, according to Salam.

"When you get off [in Middlebury], I didn't realize that the platform here is super low, so there's stairs that come off the train, so you're kind of on your own to bring your luggage down. And if your luggage is super big, you'll go down with it. And like I didn't realize there were steps, I feel like that's a little bit inaccessible," Salam said.

Amtrak does not seem to disclose any warning or disclaimer about the steep stairs at the Middlebury station prior to the trip, according to Salam. However, she noted that the conductors will help passengers as needed if they communicate accessibility needs or ask for assistance.

While Salam was initially under the impression that the Middlebury station was located by the National Bank of Middlebury, passengers actually disembark on the opposite side of the tracks, near the park by Marble Works. This location is about a 20-minute walk from campus and is dimly lit at night as it is not near the downtown streets of Middlebury. While she initially planned on walking back with a friend, Salam ended up being picked up, since walking did not seem feasible.

"There's like a parking lot, and light poles, and that's about it. There's no one around, it comes at night. There's like a little [blue light] you can hit, but how long will it take until someone gets there, you know?" Salam said.

Salam felt that ride service from the train station to campus, provided by the college, could be useful as not all students have someone to pick them up.

"That would definitely be helpful, to have a shuttle to and from the train. And it's only twice a day, it only operates twice a day, that's not too bad," Salam said.

TOM NEVINS/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

The new Amtrak station, which runs from New York's Penn Station to downtown Middlebury, began service in late July.

College makes headway on planning and construction of campus buildings

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has not broken ground on the project. According to an email from Executive President for Finance and Administration David Provost, the Board of Trustees plans to decide on a timeline and budget for the building later this year. The building will be four stories high and house up to 284 students, close to half of the usual first-year class.

Middlebury capital projects are based on the 2008 Master Plan, which was updated in 2017. According to the 2017 update, the plan acts as a "compass, guiding the way in a broad direction, rather than a roadmap outlining a specific way."

However, capital projects are also dependent on annual budgets developed by Middlebury's Finance Office, with input from Facilities and the Space Management Committee, according to Provost.

"The budget is vetted and brought forward to the Board, by the Buildings, Grounds and Lands Committee, a board of Trustees sub-committee," Provost wrote in the email.

Since 2008, all new construction has been planned in accordance with the College's sustainable design guidelines, which are based on Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification criteria.

Per the Master Plan, the LEED system "provides a recognizable benchmark for the College's commitment to maintaining a leadership role in sustainable campus planning and design."

Despite the future construction of a new residence hall and the expansion of some academic spaces, Provost stated that Middlebury does not plan on increasing enrollment and expects to enroll fewer than 2,600 students during the 2024–2025 academic year as pandemic-era enrollment levels decline.

Over the summer, work was completed on the men's and women's soccer fields.

"We feel extremely grateful that our home field, Dragone, was redone this summer. The short grass and flat surface allows the team to play clean, beautiful soccer and we can't wait to host more home games this season," said Cate Wagner '22.5, one of the women's soccer captains.

Renovation of Warner Hall, home to the Economics and Math Departments, was also completed over the summer. With an initial budget of $9 million, the project cost less than expected and was completed on time.

"This project involved the complete interior renovation and exterior restoration to both update the spaces and bring the building up to modern accessibility standards," Provost said. Interior adjustments included a new elevator and renovated staircases.

Renovations to Johnson Hall also include improved accessibility features and a gallery to display student work. The renovations cost $17 million, funded by college capital and a $10 million donation from an anonymous donor.

Future projects include the new first-year residence hall and a new student center, which will be located where Proctor Hall and the tennis courts currently are. The tennis courts will be moved to the Athletic Center area next summer.

"No construction timeline is known today, but defining the scope, site and programming of the student center will allow [the development team] to raise the needed capital to build this important project," Provost said.

TOM NEVINS/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Renovations to the Johnson Memorial Building, located along Chateau Road, will continue into the fall.

Computer science department faces unprecedented class sizes amid staffing shortages

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let them in is because of the fire code," Chodrow said.

Professor Frank Swenton, who has split time between the Computer Science and Mathematics Departments for the past 20 years, described the staff "super-shortage" in the Computer Science Department as a "perfect storm," noting that several professors are on leave and three junior faculty members left unexpectedly.

"There were other job possibilities, either in industry or academia," Swenton said. "Some professors departed in the interest of their spouse or family, or with the intention of leaving a town as small and isolated as Middlebury."

Other institutions have also reported difficulty in finding and hiring computer science professors. This past year, several of these institutions "failed a search," meaning that they were unable to hire any new professors.

Professors in the department are confident that this staffing issue will be resolved within the next year. Middlebury is currently looking to hire two more faculty members in the Computer Science Department, according to Department Chair and Professor Amy Briggs.

"Filling those positions will ensure that we have enough classes to support the growing interest in computer science," said Chodrow.

Briggs is hopeful that the department will return to its total capacity next year.

> "We're starting the hiring process now, so we're confident we'll be back to full strength in Fall 2023... Next year things should be back to normal."

"We're starting the hiring process now, so we're confident we'll be back to full strength in Fall 2023...," Briggs said. "Next year things should be back to normal."

Middlebury Regional EMS offering clinic for Omicron-targeting vaccine

By ERIC BURCHILL
Digital Director

Middlebury Regional Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is offering a walk-in clinic for the new Omicron-targeting Covid-19 vaccine in September and throughout the fall.

The new vaccine is bivalent, meaning it specifically targets the new BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron variants, while still treating all previous strains of Covid-19. Anyone aged 12 and up who has already received a primary series — two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, for most — of vaccination is eligible for the booster. The clinic is currently only offering Pfizer vaccines but plans to restock its supply of Moderna vaccines as soon as possible.

The clinic is not offering reservations, and proof of insurance is not required. The vaccine is free of charge.

Other Omicron vaccine clinics in Middlebury are offered by Kinney Drugs, Walgreens and Village Health.

Mary Miller, clinic coordinator of Middlebury Regional EMS, told The Campus that one can simply walk in any time before 3:45 p.m. but said there are times of day when they are the busiest. According to Miller, it's best "not to come first thing in the morning or last thing in the afternoon."

The clinic is not offering reservations, and proof of insurance is not required. The vaccine is free of charge.

Miller added that it is a good idea to bring one's vaccination card, so that all previous Covid-19 vaccination records are in one place, but it is not required. New vaccination cards are available on site for those who need them. For those under the age of 18, parental permission is required but can be given over the phone.

A key difference between this booster and previous boosters is its claim to provide more protection against breakthrough illnesses.

As with prior doses of the Covid-19 vaccine, Miller stressed the importance of taking care of oneself in the days after the administration of the booster.

"Stay nice and hydrated, and you can either do Tylenol or Ibuprofen for discomfort," she said.

A key difference between this booster and previous boosters is its claim to provide more protection against breakthrough illnesses. Some experts have compared the creation of the Omicron-targeting dose to the annual formulation of flu shots, but it is unclear whether annual doses of Covid-19 vaccines will be developed.

Like the initial Covid-19 vaccines, this dose can cause side effects such as soreness around the site of the injection, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, fever and nausea.

"I felt a little down for the count after getting my [booster], but I rested for a day and now I feel great," Charlie Keohane '24, who received her booster in mid-September at Middlebury EMS, told The Campus.

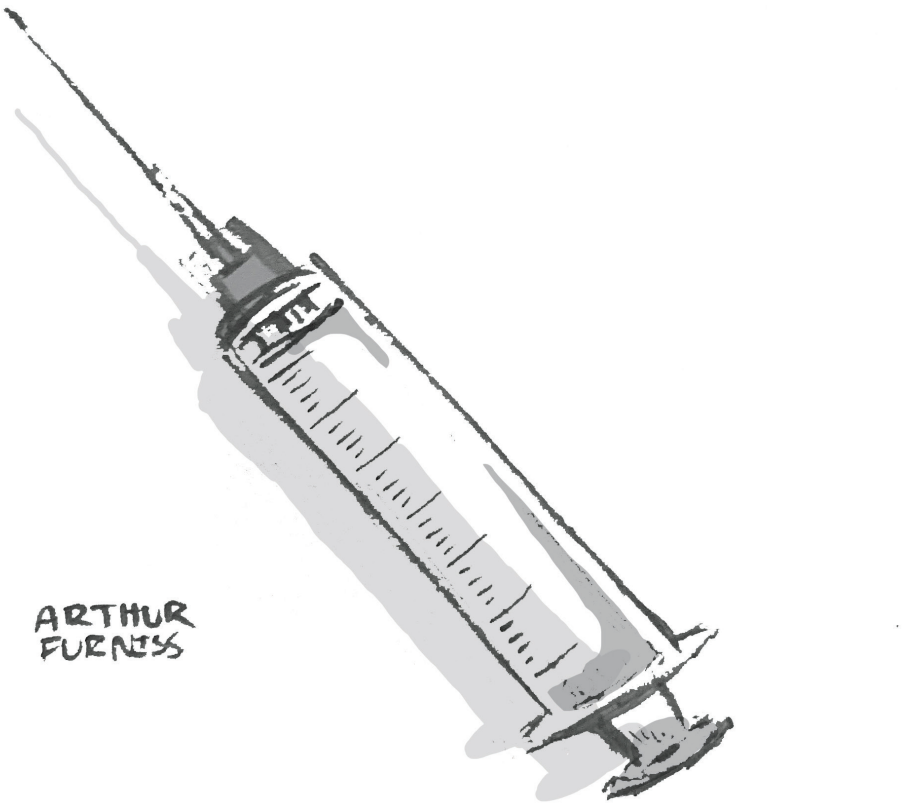
Overall, Keohane said she felt lucky her experience was so easy, especially because the whole process took under an hour.

The Biden administration has purchased 171 million doses of the bivalent Covid-19 booster, but some health experts have noted that urgency around Covid-19 is fading, preventing news of the new booster from reaching the public. On Middlebury's campus, the news of the walk-in clinic is slowly starting to circulate.

"I try to keep up with a few different news sources, and I hadn't heard about the new booster until a friend mentioned it to me," Khasai Makhulo '23 said.

Located at 55 Collins Drive, next to Porter Medical Center, the Middlebury Regional EMS walk-in clinic is open Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The site will also be hosting a special vaccine clinic this Saturday, Sept. 24 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Editor's Note: Charlie Keohane is an Editor at Large for The Campus.



19th Annual TAM Trek: Fundraising and fun running

By MAGGIE REYNOLDS & JULIA PEPPER
Senior Local Editor & Local Editor

The 19th annual TAM — Trail Around Middlebury — Trek was held this past Sunday, Sept. 18.

Maintained by the Middlebury Area Land Trust (MALT), the TAM includes 19 miles of trails for hiking, running, biking, walking, etc. in Middlebury. The trek has options to run the full 19-mile course, a 10k loop or a two-mile fun run.

According to Jamie Jo Brookside, executive director of MALT, the event began in 2004 as a team relay hike around the TAM. In 2015, the organization opened the trek to runners as a trail race and added the 10k option. Brookside took over the event in 2018 and added the fun run in an effort to attract more local families with young kids.

"The event has become our big TAM celebration of the year," Brookside told The Campus in an email. "Some runners have been coming for over a decade."

All three race options begin and end in Wright Park. While runners of the 19-mile race traverse Chipman Hill and the Class of '97 trail, 10k participants stick to a loop through Wright Park and the Otter Creek Gorge area.

"The races cover open pastoral fields, forest, along the Otter Creek, and throughout the towns of Middlebury, New Haven, Cornwall and Weybridge," Brookside added.

Leah Granger '22.5 and Ben Eltsner '22.5 both completed the full 19-mile trek this past Sunday. "It was an emotional rollercoaster," Granger told The Campus.

According to Granger, the two spent the summer here in Vermont, and realized they were not using the TAM as much as they could be. "We ran on it a little bit this summer and felt inspired," she said.

The hardest part, Granger and Elstner agreed, was ascending Chipman Hill at the beginning of the race – "[it was] a mental relief when we were done with that," Eltsner told The Campus. The pair spent the rest of the race jogging and chatting, enjoying the beautiful scenery, Granger said.

Middlebury alumni Ben Glass '20.5 traveled to Vermont from Cambridge, Mass. to compete in the 19-mile race. "It is a super fun race," Glass told The Campus by phone. "It's much more relaxed than other races I've done."

Glass said he believes trail races such as this one attract a unique type of runner — people are competitive, and serious about their performance, but also willing to chat with one another throughout the race.

According to Brookside, competitors typically include a mix of college students, locals and visitors from out of town. The youngest runner this year was three years old and the oldest was 73.

"The event has become our big TAM celebration of the year ... Some runners have been coming for over a decade."

The event is free for children aged 12 and under. It is important to MALT that all families can afford to participate in the event, Brookside said. Race entrance fees for the 10k and 19-mile race range from $45 to $55. "We don't want money to be a barrier for families to get on the TAM," she added.

This year's trek raised $16,122, all of which will go toward the costs of maintaining the TAM. The trail typically costs about $30,000 each year to maintain, Brookside said. The TAM Endowment Fund, named to honor volunteer John B. Derrick, who gives hundreds of hours each year to maintaining the trail, provides an additional $7,000 toward upkeep.

"Remaining costs are covered either by grants or funds from our general fundraising efforts such as MALT membership and contributions from local towns," Brookside said.

When asked about her favorite spot on the TAM, Brookside said that is a secret she is unwilling to share. "[However], I will say that my favorite spot is in Wright Park, so I'd encourage folks to explore all the trails of Wright Park."

The TAM Trek will return to Middlebury next September. In the meantime, upcoming events happening on the TAM can be found at MALT's website.

COURTESY PHOTO

A runner competes in the TAM Trek.

MIDDLEBURY TOWN HALL THEATER HEADS INTO NEW SEASON OF PERFORMANCES

Town Hall Theater is located at 68 South Pleasant St.

NADIA HARE/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

By MADELEINE KAPTEIN
Copy Editor

After a successful summer season, Town Hall Theater in Middlebury is heading into its new season and is excited to welcome the Middlebury College community back. There are several ongoing and upcoming events this fall.

Relevant titles for the next few months include "Front Porch Follies," "Admissions," "Writing on the Wall" and "Stealing from Work." Preparations for the J-Term musical "Fun Home" are also underway.

Notable events from this past season at Town Hall Theater include live performances at the venue behind American Flatbread and an organized World Music & Wine series at Lincoln Peak Vineyard.

On Friday, Sept. 23, young actor Gina Stevenson and her husband Quin Rol will perform the last outdoor showing of "Front Porch Follies," a series they invented after moving from New York City to Burlington, Vt. The couple experienced a sudden cultural change after the move up north. This culture shock included Front Porch Forum — an online platform founded in 2006 that provides space for Vermonters to post about neighborhood matters such as lost dogs, block parties and disagreements.

The couple found the platform's dynamics immensely entertaining. They retell the highlights in a series of dramatic readings, which last about 45 minutes in total.

This Friday's 8:30 p.m. is their last outdoor performance at the American Flatbread pavilion. There is no charge but registration on the website is required due to seating limitations.

Keeping with the comedic theme, the upcoming play "Admissions" highlights the supposed-white, progressive headmaster and dean of admissions at a boarding school in New Hampshire who work to diversify the school's population. Put on by the Middlebury Acting Company, the couple must tangle with the relationship between their public values and personal decisions when their son's dreams to go to an Ivy League are jeopardized.

While satirical, the story may be of interest to the college community because of its messages about diversity and the progressive white hand in college admissions, especially at predominantly white institutions such as Middlebury. The piece won the 2018 Drama Desk Award for Best Play.

"The director... felt [the story] had local significance and could generate some interesting discussion," Lisa Mitchell, executive director of Town Hall Theater, told The Campus. Mitchell also mentioned that the company has been working with the Middlebury College Admissions Office.

The play has showings on Oct. 7 and 8 at 7:40 p.m.; Oct. 9 at 2 p.m.; Oct. 13, 14 and 15 at 7:30 p.m.; and Oct. 16 at 2 p.m. Tickets are $15 for students and $30 for adults.

An art exhibit is also on display at Town Hall Theater. Samuel Wyatt's "Writing on the Wall" has been showing since Aug. 19 and remains until Sept. 30.

Wyatt's work imitates graffiti in order to closer examine the qualities of urban settings.

"[It is] different from our norm, it's untraditional and that's why I like it," Mitchell said of Wyatt's work.

She added that Gallery Manager Ellie Friml planned for this particular show to coincide with the Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival, which took place in late August. "There's a lot of youthful energy both in Wyatt's work and in the filmmaking," Mitchell said.

The gallery is open Monday through Friday from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m., as well as the hour before/after shows and intermissions, to give visitors a chance to take a look while they are already at the theater.

COURTESY OF LISA MITCHELL

> "I find that whenever college students are in the building there's always this feeling of 'Why aren't we here more, this is a great place.'"

NADIA HARE/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

In November, "Stealing from Work" will be shown at Town Hall Theater. Written by Marianne DiMasco and Angie Albeck and directed by Seth Jarvis, the sketch comedy show won the 2019 Best Comedy Troupe in Vermont Award. The show is currently celebrating 10 years of performances in the state.

The cast is a mix of actors of different backgrounds and experience levels, and each show is written in advance to be unique. They have performed in Middlebury in the past. According to Broadway World, the cast's style imitates Saturday Night Live with a stream of references to Vermont culture mixed in.

"Stealing from Work" will be performed on Nov. 4 at 7 p.m for $20 a ticket.

In addition to these fall performances, Town Hall Theater is preparing for the college's annual J-Term musical. The team is in the process of auditions for "Fun Home" — a Pulitzer Prize-winning memoir piece by Alison Bechdel about discovering her sexuality through her childhood and her relationship with her gay father.

The musical was chosen by Town Hall Theater Artistic Director Doug Anderson for its timeliness, high-quality music and ability to be brought to life.

The J-Term production will be the biggest collaboration between the theater and students for the year, but Mitchell said she and her team are hoping to bring more students in the door to see productions.

"I find that whenever college students are in the building there's always this feeling of 'Why aren't we here more, this is a great place,'" Mitchell said.

Mitchell added that she and her team put consistent effort into bringing an array of performances to Town Hall Theater each season. "Because of the variety of companies we have — an orchestra, Middlebury Acting Company, Counterpoint Music — having all of those in our grouping also keeps our programming diverse and interesting," she said.

More information about upcoming events can be found on the Town Hall Theater website.

NADIA HARE/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Middlebury students need sustained support, not just diversified admissions

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

The recently reported admission statistics for the class of 2026 and 2026.5 illustrate a significant increase in the prevalence of first-generation students: 21% of these incoming students are the first in their family to attend college, compared to 11% of the class of 2023 and 2023.5. The percentage of domestic students of color is also the highest in the college's history at 38%.

We as an Editorial Board are excited and grateful for the Admission Office's dedication to recruiting increasingly diverse classes. But what happens when students get here? Above all else, it is critical that continued increases in first-generation students and students of color on campus is accompanied by a concurrent increase in accessible and equitable support systems for those students. If students have relocated to rural Vermont — a state that is 95.1% white — only to find there is not adequate infrastructure to support them, we as an institution have failed.

Students facing financial hardship, impostor syndrome or just the general discomfort of a predominantly white institution, should not have to jump through additional hoops. For instance, to receive an opportunity grant — a fund to help cover expenses in order to "gain access to participation in all aspects of a Middlebury education" — students must apply through Handshake. One editor mentioned that in the process of applying for an opportunity grant, she felt as though she had to rehash past trauma in order to receive a new laptop.

> [There must be] a concurrent increase in accessible and equitable support systems for those students.

Middlebury can also take steps to rectify the myriad costs that can arise in addition to need-blind aid, as students are often left struggling to find affordable summer storage, textbooks, transportation and health insurance options. At the end of the day, students should not be expected to navigate these additional financial burdens on their own.

In addition, Middlebury must commit to hiring and retaining faculty and staff of color. This is particularly true for employees in support roles for students, like mental health counselors. Last year, when editorializing on the dire need for better mental health services, we opined that "more than ever, we're ready to state that these provisions are not optional, and the college should pay as much as is necessary to fully staff mental health resources." This is just as true now as it was then, and it is critical that Middlebury's counselors reflect the changing demographics of the student body.

The need to recruit employees of color is also widely applicable when it comes to professors, as many students have long expressed concerns about white faculty members teaching courses that are rooted in Black, Latino, Asian and Middle Eastern studies.

In 2020, the college published a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) action plan, part of which addressed faculty and staff. But it is unclear how far the college has come towards meeting many of the goals they laid out in that document, especially since one of the action plan initiatives, a "dashboard that tracks progress towards institutional DEI goals and anti-oppression and anti-racist initiatives," has not yet been created.

> It's far past time our institution commits to providing a Middlebury experience that works for everyone.

The same lack of transparency about progress goes for the other sections: Students, Fostering and Restoring Community, Accessibility, and Transparency and Accountability. Though we appreciate the efforts to offer DEI office hours and access to the anti-racist learning hub, neither of these resources provide marginalized students with what they really need: long-term, tenable support systems that extend beyond just orientation week.

In its current state, Middlebury does not have enough services to support the students whose admission statistics they tout. But this does not need to be the case. It's far past time our institution commits to providing a Middlebury experience that works for everyone.

Cultivating change: Working to build a community where everyone feels safe

Op-ed

Ciara Carlson-Healy *and* ***Remi Welbel*** *are members of the class of 2022.5*

In the summer of 2020, Middlebury students, alumni and activists rallied together in support of Black Lives Matter and formed a coalition to work towards dismantling oppressive structures on our campus. The students forming this coalition came together from a number of groups including Concerned Students of Middlebury and Middlebury Cops Off Campus. Collaborating with student activists from other campuses such as the University of Vermont and with members of the greater Middlebury and Vermont community, we began an open dialogue with the administration to discuss ways in which we could make our community a space that actively combats racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia and religous discrimination.

As white individuals, we firmly believe that the work of dismantling oppressive structures at Middlebury falls not only onto the shoulders of the BIPOC community. We are passionate about building a community at Middlebury where all students feel safe and have the resources to care for their mental and physical well-being. We believe that all students on our campus, especially those that hold privileged identities, must be active participants in creating this safer community. The only way to do that is by gathering student power through the Community Safety Coalition, where we can directly communicate with the Department of Public Safety.

In a letter to President Patton, written in July 2020 and signed by over 1,000 students, faculty, alumni, family members and staff, Middlebury Cops off Campus provided a vision for what our campus could like if changes were made to address racism and discrimination, writing, "We know we have a long way to go, but we imagine a future wherein Middlebury is a safer, more equitable place for all of us...We imagine a Middlebury where policing is obsolete, where trained community members take care of each other following principles of restorative justice, harm-reduction, consent, de-escalation, and community repair; where we promote each other's health and well-being instead of investing in racist, punitive systems of control; where our commitment to anti-racism and Black liberation extends beyond performative words and does the work of dismantling the structures of white supremacy on our campus and beyond."

Middlebury Cops of Campus also compiled testimonials from students about their experiences with Public Safety and expressed the urgent need for change, and the hope for a brighter future for our Middlebury community. Writing about the need to imagine a different future, Lynn Travnikova '20.5 and former Co-Chair of Community Council, stated, "It is imperative that we make Middlebury somewhere safe and welcoming for people of color both culturally and systemically. Especially for Black people, the presence of a Public Safety body which has a history of discrimination against BIPOC is a major barrier to this. The presence of a body which polices the campus with punitive intentions and the potential to inflict harm cannot be part of Middlebury's future. Middlebury has the resources to coordinate responses to the needs Public Safety currently addresses in a way which centers justice and provides help over punitive measures. In this change is a cultural shift towards anti-racism, justice, mutual assistance, and personal/interpersonal accountability."

We began working on this initiative during the summer of 2020 and have continued to engage in dialogue with members of the administration alongside other student organizers to further this work and actualize the goals set forth two years ago. We understood that in order to create a collective cultural shift on our campus towards anti-racism and anti-oppression, especially given our status as a predominantly white institution, we needed structures that supported such a shift. This felt particularly critical as it pertained to the national context of bias and marginalization by law enforcement. While our Department of Public Safety is not a law enforcement agency, this context still influences perceptions of the Department among students and the lived experiences of students on our campus.

In order to work towards building a campus that unequivocally values the physical and mental wellbeing of all students at Middlebury, particularly those who have been historically targeted by policing agencies, we and a group of students and staff formed the Community Safety Coalition (CSC) in collaboration with the Department of Public Safety. The Coalition, co-chaired by a student representative and the Director of Public Safety, will provide students with a direct avenue to communicate with the administration.

The CSC is a working group dedicated to guiding and supporting the Department of Public Safety in its efforts to foster a safe and welcoming campus for all. Our overarching goal is to break away from a traditional security culture by creating and sustaining a proactive community of collective responsibility. We strive to create and facilitate dialogue around topics like restorative practices, racism, and how to transform the Department of Public Safety into a resource that feels safe and accessible to everyone. Collecting and communicating student feedback on our experiences with the Department and what we need to feel truly safe on our campus is essential to this mission.

This year, in support of our mission, the Coalition will work on the following action items:

Compile an annual student climate safety report.

Support the transition to the use of restorative practices across campus.

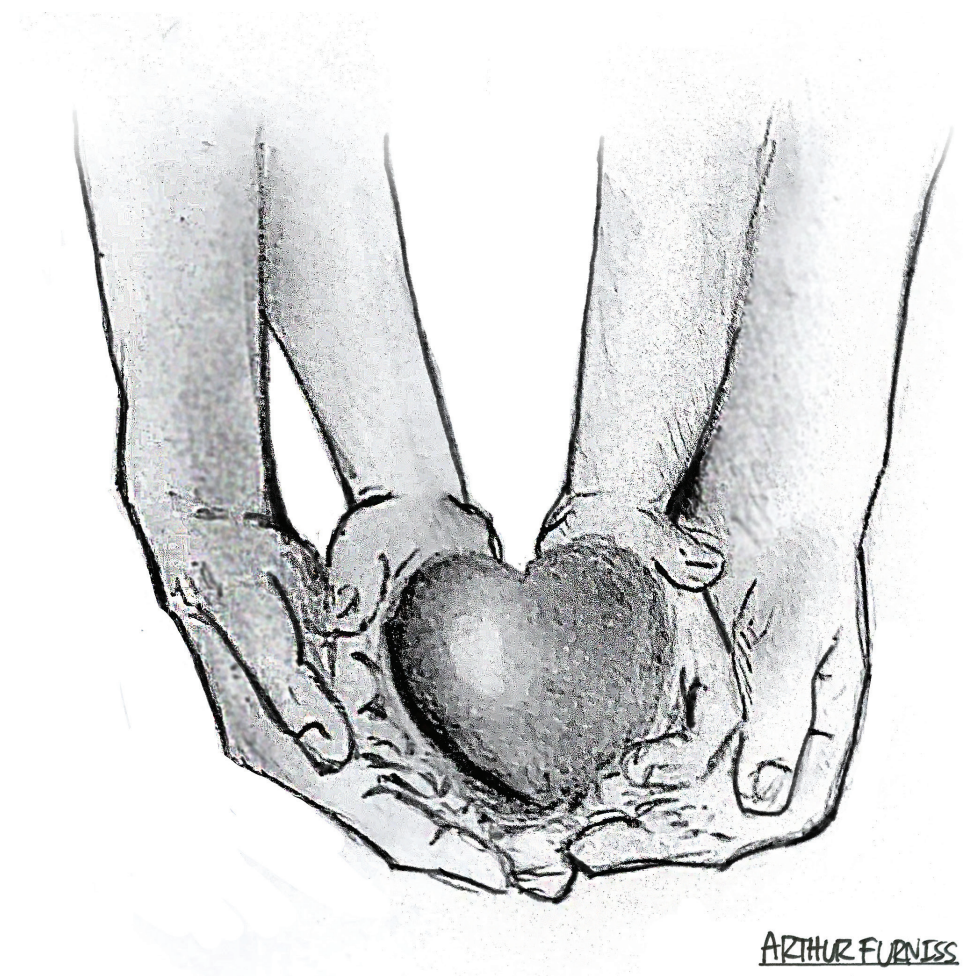
Review issues that affect the safety and wellbeing of the Middlebury College community.

Provide feedback to the Department of Public Safety and other relevant college officials regarding possible improvements to campus safety policies and procedures.

Assist the Department of Public Safety in developing an effective outreach program designed to educate the community on various safety topics including the Department's roles and responsibilities and best practices.

We want to create a campus where no one is afraid to call for help. Come join us. go/safetycoalition

We invite students of all identities and backgrounds to join us in fostering stronger community safety practices at Middlebury by going to go/safetycoalition by Friday, September 23rd. If you have any questions, reach out to Ciara Carlson-Healy (ccarlsonhealy@middlebury.edu) or Remi Welbel (rwelbel@middlebury.edu).



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The Middlebury Campus

ACA-DITIONS: A SURVEY OF THE MIDDLEBURY A CAPPELLA SCENE

By JOSHUA GLUCKSMAN
Contributing Writer

"Why on earth does Middlebury have six a cappella groups?" Or so I asked myself on a Sunday as I sat in the Chapel and watched each group perform a song at the annual "A Cappella Jambo" to advertise their upcoming auditions. For such a small college, Middlebury has an astonishing variety of a cappella groups. So, on Tuesday, Sept. 13, I took it upon myself to try out for each one, with the goal of answering one question: what makes each of these groups so different from the other five?

Stuck in the Middle (SIM)

I walked into the Chateau for a friendly and laid-back first audition with SIM, the newest male and non-binary identifying group on campus. They are known for high-energy performances, as was clear at the Jambo in their successful guitar solo, as well as the inclusion of a pause for a musical jingle advertising their group mid-performance.

The group performed "Just a Gigolo" by Louis Prima, a dynamic, funny song that describes the group's desire to create an engaging musical experience. "We want to create a culture of people who listen and participate in a cappella," said Ryan Yin '23, co-music director of SIM.

This year's Jambo was important for all of the groups on campus. After the relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions, this was the first time since the fall of 2019 that Jambo happened in-person indoors, allowing for a more vibrant audience — a situation that SIM thrived on. "This Jambo was an important opportunity to really showcase our energy, which is very uniquely SIM," Thomas Long '25 said. The term the group uses to define itself: boolery.

The Dissipated 8 (D8)

Next, I walked into a very different atmosphere, the darkest and most academic room, and thus the most decidedly D8 room on campus: the Abernethy Room. D8 is the oldest male and non-binary identifying group on campus, and their aesthetic is part of an old Middlebury tradition. It also, however, came in stark contrast to their performance of "The Man Who Can't Be Moved" by the Script at Jambo, a song that showcased a more emotional side of the group in addition to putting their singing abilities on full display.

While the group is very committed to providing a technically beautiful performance and upholding their long-standing reputation, it was also important that they performed well at Jambo for themselves. "Sure, sometimes we sing for the audience, but, for a lot of us, we sing for ourselves and each other," Business Manager Kyle Matthys '24 said. The word that D8 used to describe themselves? Dedication.

The Bobolinks

After D8, I hustled over to the Forest East lounge to meet up with the oldest gender-inclusive a cappella group on campus, the Bobolinks. At Jambo, the group sang "Pure Imagination" by Gene Wilder, which was a very conscious choice. Not only did this arrangement play to the group's strengths with rich, close harmonies, but it also emphasized how important opening their arms to new singers is to them. "The main line in the song is 'come with me,' and we really wanted to show how open we are to others," Music Director Phoebe Davis '24.5.

The Bobolinks find Jambo important for several reasons, mainly that getting their community back together early on in the school year and performing together is a big part of why they are so close. "Music is also really important for everyone at the school to set the tone for the year," Bella Lucente '25 said. The one word the Bobos use to describe themselves: joyous.

The Mamajamas

The Mamajamas, a gender-inclusive group, welcomed me into the cozy Atwater B Library with snacks and plenty of comfy sofas to settle in on before a great audition. For Jambo, the group chose "Pusher Love" by Justin Timberlake, a song that showcased the group's talent and strongest voices. Performances like these are what make the Mamajamas stand out. They exhibit a fuller and warmer sound because of their large vocal range. While those vocal considerations are important, some group members see the Jambo song choice as much simpler. "Our process of choosing the song was simple. We ran through all of our options and this one we thought was the most groovy," Social Chair Jack Waitz '24 said.

One part of Mamajamas culture is to check in with each other before each rehearsal. "It really feels like we make sure to have our emotions and community in tune alongside our voices," Business Manager Marina Prikis '25 said. The word they use for themselves: steezy.

The Mischords

While I was not able to officially audition for the Mischords, Middlebury's oldest female and non-binary identifying group, I was able to sing a bit with them and hear about their Jambo experience. In my mock audition, I was surprised by the extra technical singing tests. The music director would play three notes and ask me to sing a specific one back, and I also had to complete a three note chord after being given only two of the notes.

The Mischords sang "Next to Me" by Emily Sandé at Jambo. This song has two soloists, and singing it is a big tradition for the group. This song was sung many years ago when some of the current seniors were first-years, and seeing their growth through this song was very important to the soon-to-graduate singers. "This song reminds me how important an all-female group was to my growth during my four years here" Aidan Amster '23.5 said. The song is also a good fit for the group because it emphasizes the unique energy that the Mischords bring compared to other groups that sing in a lower register. The word the group uses to describe itself: playful-femininity.

The Paradiddles

The Paradiddles, Middlebury's newest female and non-binary identifying group, performed "Sister Golden Hair" by America at Jambo and chose the song because it is a classic, upbeat tune they enjoy performing. My audition with The Paradiddles was also unofficial and followed a similar format to my Mischords audition, including technical singing tests. The Paradiddles emphasize the aspects of their community that take place outside of rehearsal. "While we do work hard to create a great group sound, we view the social part of our group to be just as important," said Paradiddles' treasurer Cate Parkinson '25. The word they use to describe themselves: genuine.

Although my voice was gone by the end of the jam-packed evening of auditions, my heart was content with the raw beauty of making music as a group. I felt like I had a really good grasp on the quirks of each of the six groups and how they were able to create such a dynamic Jambo that weekend. I sincerely hope that this guide serves as a way for any interested future-singers to gauge the overwhelming a cappella scene on campus. If there is anything I have learned about why there are so many a cappella groups on campus, it's that there are a lot of niches to fill!

Editor's note: Abigail Chang '23 is the Editor in Chief of The Campus, and she is also the music director of The Paradiddles. Chang was not involved in the reporting or editing of this article.

Catalog curveballs: Students find joy in unlikely classes

SOPHIA AFSAR-KESHMIRI
Contributing Writer

The beginning of the semester can be incredibly stressful for a million reasons, but one universal dilemma Middlebury students face is class scheduling. If you haven't frantically emailed professors about getting on their waitlist, attended a class you're unsure if you'll get a seat in or dropped a class and had to scramble to find a fourth, what is your secret? So much of the process is left up to luck. No amount of prior planning can help you avoid the mad-dash of clicking at 7:30 a.m. Even if you're praying to the Wi-Fi gods that your computer will be the mighty conqueror and break through that first Banner page before anybody else's.

There are a number of reasons why we find ourselves scrambling to find the perfect, ever-elusive fourth class. But the bottom line is that it is difficult to be ecstatic about each and every class in our schedules and avoid giving in and taking any class just for the sake of having a fourth class.

While the process is fickle, some students have been able to find, and fall in love with, hidden gems from Middlebury's course catalog.

Elizabeth Bowen '24.5 and Jean Wan '24 both discovered their majors after the nature of Middlebury's registration process encouraged them to take classes in new departments.

"I didn't like one of the classes I signed up for, and one of my friends encouraged me to join his intro CS [Computer Science] class. I remembered it being fun when I coded in high school, so [I] decided to try it out," Bowen said.

"It turned out to be my favorite class of the semester," she added.

If you've ever wondered whether or not you should take a computer science class at Middlebury, it may be worth a try, according to Bowen.

"I never felt comfortable taking a CS class at my competitive highschool," Bowen said. "The classes were heavily male-dominated, and I didn't feel like CS was a space I belonged in."

However, Bowen raved about the collaborative, inclusive environment the intro class offered her at Middlebury.

"People love this class, partially because it feels empowering to be shown that you can code at this simple level that is a gateway to more complicated concepts and coding," she said.

Wan took a film class called Fan Video during J-Term, choosing the class as an avenue by which to explore a pre-existing interest that she had not found room in her schedule for until then.

"I have always been into video editing and contemporary pop media so this class really sounded like the class I have been waiting for," she said.

Not only did she discover her major through this class, but she explained she also found an amazing community.

"I actually had a very wholesome experience," she said. "People were very supportive of each other's creative work and we had a very friendly and open environment for everyone to share their own fan videos."

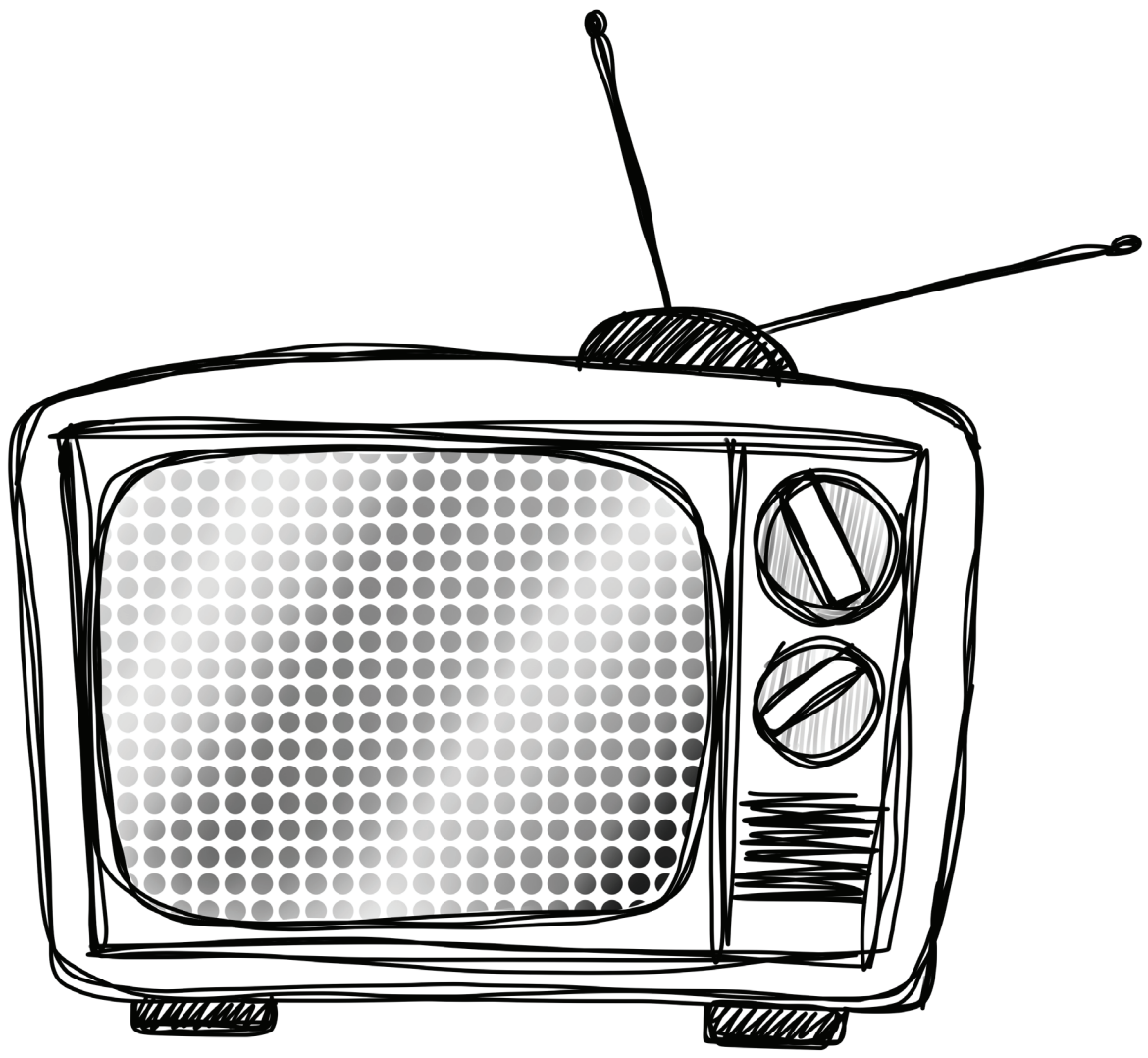
"I was surprised by how friendly and close everyone can get in an online class, and some of the people I met in the class became my best friends in college ever since," Wan added.

Jonathan Carrol-Madden '24 hit a distribution requirement jackpot with the linguistics class Phonetics and Phonology, a neuroscience elective which also counts as a science credit. "I [...] took it on a whim, with the idea in the back of my head that maybe this could help me understand and work on improving my accent in Russian," he said.

"It ended up being one of the most rewarding classes I have taken here," Carrol-Madden said. "The professor was incredible and engaging. He made the course pretty easy to engage with regardless of your interest in phonetics — or even science."

Recapping summer TV favorites

By CHARLIE KEOHANE
Editor at Large



If you're anything like me, summertime is for catching up on TV shows. This season brought the latest installments of fan-favorite shows like "Stranger Things," "Never Have I Ever" and "Only Murders in the Building," but also fresh and exciting programs. I will be recapping four of my favorite new shows from the past few months in this article. Happy watching!

"The Bear"

Hulu cooked up a smart, heartfelt new show with "The Bear," which follows Chef Carmen "Carmy" Berzatto (Jeremy Allen White) as he tries to revitalize a struggling sandwich shop in Chicago following his brother's death. Carmy's fine dining background clashes with the staff's traditional values, especially gruff, old-school Richie (Ebon Moss-Bachrach). The arrival of talented but inexperienced Chef Sydney (Ayo Edebiri) further complicates the dynamic, and chaos ensues.

"The Bear" packs eight short episodes full of high-intensity situations and whip-smart humor, with dozens of montages of the chefs preparing their famous beefsteak sandwiches. "The Bear" is not a quiet show, and it asks a lot of its viewers. The tense, high-pressure restaurant environment is brought to life on-screen as characters scream, swear and talk over each other. Things are set on fire, knives slip off counters, food is burned. The exploration of friendships, family, food and grief feels authentic even if it's rough around the edges. And no spoilers here, but the twist ending sets "The Bear" up for an interesting second season.

"Severance"

Have you ever wished you could leave work behind when you leave the office? Well, in the world of Apple TV's hit show "Severance," a futuristic company (with nefarious undertones) have undergone a surgical procedure where their work and home memories are permanently severed. The show follows Mark (Adam Scott), who is struggling with the loss of his wife and simultaneously becoming more aware of conflict in and outside of work. The arrival of a new coworker, Helly (Britt Lower), raises more questions about the origins and use of the mysterious severance procedure.

Kudos to "Severance" for bringing such a unique and insane concept to life, but do not expect to get all the answers by the end of the season. Mark and Helly perform a job that is undisclosed to the audience, and due to the nature of the severance procedure, they can never see their complete reality. The show raises interesting questions about work-life balance, the bleak nature of corporate work and the grieving process. Although the show is dystopian, it does not seem too far removed from reality. "Severance" is not fast-paced, and small moments and bits of information build to a dramatic, stressful conclusion. I was biting my nails by the finale episode and am eagerly anticipating season two.

"The Dropout"

"The Dropout" proves that sometimes reality is stranger than fiction. This limited mini-series follows the dramatic rise and fall of Elizabeth Holmes (Amanda Seyfried) and her defunct company Theranos, which raised billions of dollars under the false promise of developing new blood testing technology. Throughout eight episodes on Hulu, viewers watch Holmes grow up and drop out of Stanford University before starting Theranos with her on-again, off-again partner, Sunny Balwani (Naveen Andrews). The lies, fraud and coverup keep snowballing, building into a disaster you can't look away from.

"The Dropout" is a thrilling story of deception, but it is also a look into a twisted partnership and the price of ambition. Seyfried, who recently won an Emmy for her excellent portrayal of the role, nails Holmes' awkward mannerisms and deep voice. Although you may be familiar with the scandal, this mini-series gives insight into how it developed and spiraled out of control. It also introduces compelling storylines with Holmes' family members, journalists and Theranos employees. It's a treat to watch this maddening, jaw-dropping tale unfold in a well-crafted performance.

"Conversations with Friends"

Sally Rooney's debut novel hits the big screen with this Hulu adaptation. "Conversations with Friends" follows smart, introspective Frances (Alison Oliver, in her debut television role), a college student in Dublin, Ireland and her friend and ex-girlfriend, Bobbi (Sasha Lane). Frances and Bobbi meet bubbly writer Melissa (Jemima Kirke) and her shy actor husband, Nick (Joe Alwyn), leading to a blossoming of platonic and romantic connections within the group.

Much like the eponymous novel, "Conversations with Friends" bumbles along in a "no plot, just vibes" kind of way. It's a slice-of-life television show with beautiful shots of Ireland and Croatia, the two locales where the characters travel on vacation. It also includes tender moments surrounding Frances' development as a young woman. Throughout twelve episodes, she deals with health problems, sex and intimacy, self-harm, family struggles, her writing and her friendships. "Conversations with Friends" masterfully builds chemistry and tension between the main characters as they fall in love and keep secrets from each other. The dynamics between the four main characters are blurry and messy, but I think Oliver anchors the show well. Despite mixed reviews, I enjoyed the show and would recommend it to fans of Rooney's work especially. Plus, the soundtrack features a fabulous new song from Phoebe Bridgers.

REEL CRITIC: "Thor: Love and Thunder"

By JACK TORPEY
Arts & Culture Editor

Early in "Thor: Love and Thunder," the latest Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) film from writer-director Taika Waititi, a world-weary Thor (Chris Hemsworth) is meditating when his trance is broken by Peter Quill (Chris Pratt), the leader of the Guardians of the Galaxy. "Thor, we need your help to win this battle," Quill says. The god of thunder rises, flies to the battlefield and proceeds to decimate an army of aliens to the tune of Guns N' Roses' "Welcome to the Jungle." Watching Thor answer his friends' call to save them from defeat and then deliver on their request with rockstar swagger, it's difficult not to imagine Waititi jamming to Led Zeppelin in his office only to be interrupted by MCU president Kevin Feige with an urgent plea: "Taika, we need your help to save the Marvel Cinematic Universe."

God knows it needed saving. After "Avengers: Endgame" and "Spider-Man: Far from Home" put an end to the MCU's truly miraculous run of 23 interconnected films in 2019, the studio has since dropped a string of uncharacteristically shaky releases. Recent movies have ranged from the dull ("Black Widow"), to the overhyped ("Spider-Man: No Way Home") all the way to the downright bad ("Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness"). Nonetheless, expectations were high for "Thor: Love and Thunder" coming off the massive success of "Thor: Ragnarok." Ragnarok was Waititi's 2017 MCU debut and the film that reinvigorated a stale Thor character by tapping into his wild comedic potential. And on the off chance that an office meeting between Waititi and Feige really occurred, the director's effort in "Thor: Love and Thunder" would indicate that he answered the call for salvation with the same triumphant flair as his on-screen hero. With Hemsworth settling into the title role more comfortably than ever, Christian Bale delivering the MCU's finest one-off villain performance and Waititi rattling off the blend of hilarious dialogue and sincere emotion that made "Ragnarok" a smash hit, "Thor: Love and Thunder" emerges as Marvel's most utterly enjoyable outing since the glory days of "Endgame."

Marvel movies of late have felt obligatory, as if the studio is releasing them only to service a request made by fans or inch closer towards its loftier universe-constructing goals. This is not "Thor: Love and Thunder," however. The colorful superhero romp has a meaningful story to tell and demands that audiences see its reason for existence from the first frame. In a word, the film is alive. It crackles with deadpan wit, an onslaught of stinging one-liners and absurd gags making it the funniest film in Marvel's collection since — surprise! — "Ragnarok." Balancing out the relentless comedy are scenes of genuine dramatic feeling, none more impactful than the prologue's introduction of Gorr the God Butcher (Christian Bale). Unveiling the tragic motivation behind the villain's vow to kill all gods, the extended sequence makes it clear that the sequel to the laugh fest that was "Ragnarok" will not shy away from bearing the darkness necessary to tell an enduring story.

It's fitting that Waititi would look to draw this darkness from Bale, who brings to the film a history of playing serious, morally challenging characters in films like David O. Russel's "The Fighter" and Scott Cooper's "Hostiles." He's one of the most captivating and versatile actors working in Hollywood today, and his performance in "Thor: Love and Thunder" proves just that. Stepping back into the superhero genre for the first time since playing Bruce Wayne in Christopher Nolan's "The Dark Knight" trilogy, Bale clearly looks like he's enjoying himself as a slithery, yellow-eyed demon with a deep-seated vendetta against Hemsworth's Thor. He brings all the menace that one would expect from a character known as the god butcher, but in one of the film's most satisfying elements, Bale's Gorr is also possibly the MCU's most sympathetic villain to date. The actor carefully conveys the character's trauma in the pivotal prologue, setting up a comic book movie whose antagonist is refreshingly more than just an evil man with a plan.

The film isn't called "Gorr: Love and Thunder," though. If people are talking about this movie in one hundred years, it will be because of Chris Hemsworth's take on the swashbuckling space viking. He is both the comedic and dramatic engine of the movie, carrying it with his charisma from start to finish by constantly pivoting between deliveries of Waititi's riotous dialogue and moments of real, even graceful emotion. Marvel fans will remember Hemsworth's initial role in "Thor," Kenneth Branagh's 2011 debut feature for the character. Comparing that performance with the one he gives ten years later is truly revelatory. Bearing resemblance to its director's oft-portrayed Shakespearean heroes, the 2011 film's Thor was an aristocratic brat with a dialect entrenched in the niceties of Elizabethan English. He would remain that way for his appearances in subsequent MCU films, slowly developing a personality as he tangled with Tony Stark and other "mere mortals," but it was not until Waititi stepped in with "Ragnarok" that Thor finally became what he should have been all along: a wise-cracking, self-deprecating, yet still mighty warrior battling enemies to a hard rock soundtrack. That's the Thor of "Thor: Love and Thunder," and he's an absolute blast to follow through the film. Waititi and Hemsworth should be proud, because even if Thor never reaches the icon status enjoyed by Spider-Man or Captain America, their character holds claim to a special title no Marvel hero will ever take away from him: greatest comeback story.

Thor: Love and Thunder was released on July 8, 2022 COURTESY PHOTO

SEEKING THE FUTURE: QUIDDITCH CHANGES NAME TO QUADBALL

Courtesy of Andy Cao

Middlebury Quadball finishes their first practice of the 2022 fall season.

OWEN PARK
Staff Writer

Major League Quidditch (MLQ) and U.S. Quidditch (USQ) have announced that they are changing their sport's official name to "Quadball," according to a statement released in July. The International Quidditch Association (IQA) has stated that it will adopt the name change as well.

"We are confident in this step, and we look forward to all the new opportunities Quadball will bring," said Chris Lau, chair of the IQA Board of Trustees and co-founder of the Hong Kong Quidditch Association. "This is an important moment in our sport's history."

A series of transphobic tweets by J.K. Rowling sparked interest in changing the name of the sport. Rowling, the author of the Harry Potter series that established the basis of Quidditch, took to Twitter to voice her dissent with an op-ed that called for a greater diversification in genders that could receive government-funded menstruation products while not using the word "women."

"'People who menstruate.' I'm sure there used to be a word for those people. Someone help me out. Wumben? Wimpund? Woomud?" Rowling tweeted in 2020.

In the wake of these comments, USQ and MLQ immediately began their search for a new name. However, for the now-Quadball community, there was something greater at stake in this search. Beater position captain and treasurer for the Middlebury Quadball Club Josh Harkins '25 pointed out that Rowling's comments struck a key pillar of Quadball culture: gender diversity and acceptance.

"As a sport, the Quadball community is so welcoming to all gender identities," Harkins said. "It is a mandatory co-ed sport. It really was necessary to change away from an association from someone who made that statement because it didn't fit with the community."

For many veterans of the sport, the significance of the name change extends far beyond Rowling's comments. It is one of the final puzzle pieces to fall in place to confirm something that many had known all along: Quadball is a unique sport.

For a long time, players have felt that the name "Quidditch" ties the sport too closely to the game and culture of the Harry Potter franchise. What began as a mock game on Battell Beach in 2005 has since grown into an internationally organized sport played by over 600 teams with a unique rulebook that dictates every detail, down to the types of players that can be on the field.

"For me personally there is definitely some nostalgia to the original name, but from a long term development perspective I feel confident this is a smart decision for the future that will allow the sport to grow without limits into its own unique space for many years to come," said USQ Founder Alex Benepe '09.

Renaming Quadball will allow the sport to freely market itself and grow its fan base without constraints. Relying on the term "Quidditch," which Warner Bros. has trademarked, has long tied the hands of many leagues hoping to bring in money and advertise themselves.

"There was no future [for Quadball] with the possible threat of a lawsuit of copyright," Harkins said. "To grow the sport, it is definitely necessary to have licensing deals and all sorts of stuff like that — which only comes with a name change."

Such a change is not without precedent. Notable examples of college-based sports partaking in name changes include frisbee's change to "ultimate" in order to avoid a copyright strike from Wham-O, the creators of the frisbee disc.

Aspirations of Quadball becoming more widely-played, if backed properly, seem realistic so far. In August, ESPN televised a U.S. National Quadball Team match. While watching at home, Harkins noticed not only how much better the quality of video was, but also how that contributed to his family's excitement about the sport.

"[ESPN] had a drone camera, they had the resources to make it a real production. And when the production value is up and there is a real announcer commentating, it makes a huge difference," Harkins said.

Harkins also pointed out that most matches are streamed on Youtube and Facebook through mobile devices, severely limiting the viewer's ability to follow the game. "I've had people talk to me about how much fun it was to watch and how easily they were able to understand it because it was in a more accessible format," Harkins said.

Quadball looks to be taking off in an exciting new direction, but the culture and values of Middlebury Quadball Club remain the same: being welcoming and bringing joy to all, one broomstick at a time.

Frisbee looks to stay the course after postseason success

RYAN HEINZERLING
Contributing Writer

Following impressive postseasons last spring, Middlebury's ultimate team, the Pranksters, are looking to revamp the team this fall to prepare for the spring 2023 season. Unlike last year, when the Pranksters competed in a fall tournament to make up for the lost season of spring 2020, this year looks set to be a return to normal for the men's and women's squads. The fall season, played with much lower stakes, represents a chance for the first-year class to gel with the rest of the team.

On the women's side, field captain Mady Lander '23 wants to stay the course as they look to defend their national title.

"We were definitely feeling the target a little bit in the spring following our win last fall," Lander said. "We're out there to have fun and create a space where everyone can grow as a player, whatever titles come with that are just a bonus, and the past doesn't dictate what's going to happen this year at all."

One unknown for the team is their new offensive and defensive strategies, something dependent on the new recruits joining them from the class of 2026. Lander and Raymond are looking to emphasize inclusivity in the team culture this fall and hope the new first years can help fill the shoes of the departed senior class.

Lander also cited loosening Covid-19 restrictions helping the team ease back into practicing together again. Whether on the field or apple picking at Happy Valley Orchards, the Pranksters are looking to use the fall as a great opportunity to gel as a team and tweak their game before a tough competitive season in the spring.

Field captain Malachi Raymond '24 knows just how important team bonding can be.

"Time with the team off the field has huge benefits once we cleat up," Raymond said. "I'm looking forward to having some team dinners and other events to just get to know everyone and have fun so that when we get on the field, we flow even better."

This bonding could prove vital to a team that just graduated some of its most impressive players in program history — Leo Sovell-Fernandez '22 and Walker Frankenburg '22, among others. The loss of key players, and the defeat to Oklahoma Christian University in the semifinals last spring, however, has not weakened the team's resolve. Raymond wants to go about business as usual, a strategy that yielded a National Championship in 2019, as well as two deep runs last fall and spring.

They plan to work on a new offense that he hopes will make the team more aggressive as they try to compete with Division 1 opponents to improve their game.

Courtesy of Rodney Chen

Kamryn You Mak '23 stretches for a catch during a win over Truman State in last year's national tournament.

PFL Weekly

PFL Weekly returns for a second season, featuring new hosts Cole Siefer '25, Ben Wagner '25, Sam McGarrahan '25 and Dan Urchuk '25. Tune in to hear about Middlebury Athletics' strong start to the opening weeks of the fall season, with all teams earning winning records thus far. Field hockey continues a long tradition of excellence, starting 5-0. Football snags a revenge win at Amherst, thanks in no small part to senior quarterback Ben Tauber's 290 passing yards. Cross country first years speed to strong finishes. Both men's and women's golf swing for top-5 placings in opening meets, and the tennis teams prepare for a strong fall season. Tune in this week to hear all the weekly Panther updates.

LISTEN TO THE PFL WEEKLY PODCAST ON SPOTIFY

SPORTS SUMMARY: HOW DID THE PANTHERS FARE THIS WEEKEND?

By CHARLES CROUNSE
Senior Sports Editor

TOM NEVINS/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Elise Morris '22.5 strikes a long ball upfield in Middlebury's win over Hamilton.

The beginning of every academic year is always met with great anticipation at Middlebury, not just due to the start of classes and the sight of familiar faces, but also because of the return of the fall sports season. The semester may still be in its infancy, but there are already reasons abound for Middlebury fans to be excited about the school's sports teams. Here's a look at how all the Panthers performed this past weekend:

Women's Cross Country

The women's cross country team cruised to their second consecutive win in as many weeks, placing eight runners inside the top ten en route to an almost-perfect score. Former Panther Phoebe Colvin Oehmig '21 was the first across the line, running as an alum whose score had no impact on the team. Bea Parr '25 was the first scoring runner to finish, stopping the clock at 16:59 for the 4k course. Victoria Fawcett '26 finished just ten seconds back in her second outing in Middlebury blue, while Kate Ratcliffe '25, Keegan McAuliffe '26 and Kate Kenny '23 completed the Panthers' top five.

Men's Cross Country

The men's cross country team matched the women as they, too, recorded a big win at the Aldrich Invitational, with Alec Gironda '24 claiming his second individual win of the season. Shef West '26 finished second in his Panthers debut, outkicking Union's Charlie Alekson '25 to the line. Zander Kessler '22.5, Owen Johnson '26 and Peter Burke '24 all scored for the Panthers as well, with the team ultimately winning by a comfortable margin over Union College.

Women's Soccer

The Panthers recorded a convincing 41 victory over Hamilton on Saturday in the season's home opener. Ellie Bavier '22.5 set the tone for the win, launching a bullet of a strike into the top left corner from long distance. The Continentals then equalized, but Sophia Cole '25 made sure the Panthers took a lead into halftime, coolly converting after a through ball from Ella Gagnon '23.5. Kiley Bertos '24.5 then gave the Panthers clear daylight between them and their opponents, tapping in from close range on a rebound before Gagnon sealed the win with a well taken finish off a cross from Bavier.

Men's Soccer

The men's soccer team also hosted Hamilton this Saturday, ultimately falling 1-2 in a closely contested match. Casey Lund '24 gave the Panthers the lead after 17 minutes, nodding home from a Eujin Chae '25 corner for the first goal of his Middlebury career. The Panthers led into halftime but ultimately succumbed to Hamilton's sustained pressure in the second half, conceding the winner inside the final quarter of an hour.

Women's Tennis

The women's tennis team made their first appearance of the season this past weekend, marking their first competitive outing since Taka Bertrand took charge of the team this summer. After an opening day of doubles matches, in which each Panther pair won one and lost one, the teams engaged in three rounds of singles matches. Sahana Raman '25, last year's Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) Cup runner-up, made a strong start to her season, winning three out of three. Lulu Wu '26 also went unbeaten in singles play, while Claudia Miller '25 and Nina Farhat '25 each won two and lost one.

Men's Golf

The Panthers placed 11th out of 18 teams at the recent Williams Fall Invitational, finishing fifth out of the nine NESCAC schools in attendance. Hogan Beazley '23 paced the Panthers, tying for 19th place with a two-day score of 150. Phin Choukas '22.5 and Colin McCaigue '24 were close behind as they tied for 31st with scores of 152. The Panthers narrowly lost out to conference rivals Trinity, finishing just four strokes back.

Field Hockey

The Panthers extended their astonishing win streak to 35 games in a run that dates back to the 2019 season. They tallied their first win over Hamilton on Saturday in a close 2–1 contest, with Katie George '24 providing a goal and an assist. After teeing up Audrey Lazar '23.5 in the first quarter, George slalomed through the defense to score the decisive second early in the fourth quarter. Hamilton ensured a grandstand finish with a late goal in the dying embers of the match, but the Panthers defense held strong to preserve the victory. The team returned to action just a day later, this time cruising to a 4–0 win over Babson College. Lila Branka '24 scored a hat trick of goals to fire the Panthers to victory, finishing off assists from Meg Shelburne '24, Grace Murphy '22.5 and Amy Griffin '24. Murphy also tallied a goal for the Panthers.

Football

A strong 17–6 win over conference rivals Amherst College got the Panthers up and running for the season. Ben Tauber '22.5 led the way with a strong passing performance, throwing for 290 yards with a 64% completion rate. Greg Livingston '22.5 was his most used target as the pair connected ten times for 111 yards, while Donovan Wood '24 also impressed with seven receptions for 128 yards and a touchdown. Alex Maldjian '23.5 also chipped in with a rushing score, and a Zach Levy '25 field goal from 20 yards out extended the Panthers' lead. The team played shutdown defense on the other side of the ball as Kwesi Adu-Diawuo '23.5 and Colby Burke '25 both intercepted Amherst quarterback Mike Piazza '24. Kieran Sheridan '23.5 and John McCool '23.5 led the team with six solo tackles each.

Volleyball

The volleyball team kicked off NESCAC competition this weekend with two tricky away games at Williams and Amherst, ultimately slipping in two defeats. The Panthers firmly challenged Williams through four closely contested sets, winning the second 25–19 but losing the other three by just two points each. Lexi Linafelter '24 and Katie Kraczkowsky '24 led the scoring for the Panthers, each recording 11 kills. Kelly Ferrero '23.5 also impressed with 34 digs while Gabbie O'Toole '25 led the way in setting with 33 assists. It was a similar storyline on Sunday as the Panthers tied the match with a second set victory only to fall in the third and fourth sets for another 3–1 loss. Linafelter topped the scoring for the Panthers again with 14 kills, followed by Kraczkowsky with 12 and Ava Tuccio '26 with nine. Nearly everything the team did offensively went through O'Toole, who tallied 37 assists. Ferrero led the team defensively with 26 digs, closely followed by Britt Lange '24 with 25.

Editor's note: Lexi Linafelter '24 is a Sports Editor for The Campus. She was not involved in the editing of this article.

TOM NEVINS/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS